TRANSMITTAL SLIP	DATE 2 May 1967
TO:	
ROOM NO.	BUILDING
REMARKS: This was the meeting at which the decision was made to fly the OXCART. The first flight was 23 May 1967.	
FROM:	
ROOM NO.	BUILDING / EXTENSION

FORM NO. 241 1 FEB 55 REPLACES FORM 36-8 WHICH MAY BE USED. (47)

The Washington Post

Outlook

EDITORIALS

With every new escalation, the struggle in Vietnam approaches a plateau of violence at which the next steps could lead to all-out war, possibly with Russia and China. At this point in time and terror, the questions arise anew: Who makes our decisions and by what process?

Who are the hawks and the doves in the Administration? Where does power lie or inclination lead among McNamara, Rusk and Rostow? If the President directs our war, does he see where we go next? For three weeks, a team of Washington Post reporters composed of

Philip Geyelin, Murrey Marder, Chalmers M. Roberts and George C. Wilson, aided by William Chapman, Andrew J. Glass, Richard Harwood and Carroll Kilpatrick, interviewed major Administration officials to find at least the beginnings of answers and to try to describe . . .

How We Deal With the Vietnam War

THE WAR IN VIETNAM is run by Lyndon Baines Johnson more directly, and probably more intimately, than any President has run any previous war. And up to a point, he runs it with much the same techniques he used to manipulate the United States Senate.

But only up to a point. The President's predilection for "holding the options open," his passion for cloaking his every move in secrecy, his penchant for withholding his commitment until events force it from him, his mastery at playing conflicting forces off against each other—all these traits are basic to his war management. And they make the war that much more confusing to millions of Americans.

To the relative handful of Johnson-watchers of another day, they are the familiar trade marks of a strikingly successful Senate Majority Leader.

But the analogy can only be carried so far, and not simply because the war in Vietnam is incomparably less manageable than the Senate. By its nature, it is probably a lot harder to manage than any other war in history.

Yet the manner in which it is run could scarcely be more pertinent at this moment, for the Vietnam struggle, by the reckoning of most of the President's principal advisers, is almost certainly approaching a crucial turning point.

Peace prospects have seldom seemed so bleak. But the President is also rapidly reaching the limits of what can be done in the way of piling more military pressure on North Vietnam without dramatically altering current policy against the deliberate bombing of non-military targets, such as population centers, and against expanding the ground war into Cambodia, Laos or North Vietnam.

Of course, he can continue the present type of military pressure.

Or he could opt for a more passive policy, based on a still-controversial concept of putting together a physical barrier across Vietnam, and perhaps Laos as well.

But not even his closest advisers would venture to predict with assurance what he will do. Some significant clues, however, emerge unmistakably from an examination of the process by which he reaches his decisions, of the contradictory counsel he receives and of the influences at work upon him. Not the least of these influences is the frustrating nature of the war itself.

A War of Imprecision

ITS AIM IS not to conquer, but to foreclose conquest. It employs armed force, but in intricate combination with political, diplomatic and psychological weapons. It is essentially a war of response and reactions to the enemy's moves, or to Saigon politics, or to the ebb and flow of battle, or to entreaties for peace from the United Nations or the Pope. Nobody can safely say how, let alone when, it will end; or what, precisely, we should expect when it does.

This very imprecision invites unprecedented pressures at home and abroad to expand or contract our military effort, to enlarge or play down the probing for peace. The result is that essentially tactical decisions which in other wars would be reserved for the Government's war councils are up for continuous general debate.

In one sense, all this is made to order for a former Majority Leader who was never an initiator or creator as much as he was one who harnessed forces, or balanced them, or tried to bend them according to his needs.

But the combination of an exceptionally complex war and an exceptionally complex President also makes the decision-making process that much more complex.

When Mr. Johnson finally reaches a major decision, he is often obliged, as President, to propound it publicly in terms far more sweeping and binding than he was accustomed to using in the backroom during his Senate days. This doesn't always happen, however. In the day-to-day operation of the war, important moves are made in strict secrecy and confided to the public later, if at all.

But every move is calculated by some inscrutable computer within the President. It blinks and hums and roars and suddenly falls silent in baffling fashion as it devours an endless diet of policy papers, statistical data, newspaper gleanings, formal recommendations of responsible officials and informal advice and counsel from a variety of individuals.

A Remarkable Instrument

THE JOHNSON COMPUTER is a remarkable instrument in its ability to sort and weigh, and in its appetites. But like all such instruments it is the prisoner of what is fed into it. And what it is fed often is sharply contradictory, not always reliable or even factual, and sometimes not even strictly relevant.

Intelligence reports in any war are often hit-or-miss and the reporting from Vietnam is all the more so. Casualties, enemy infiltration rates, pacification progress, Saigon's internal politics—all of this is difficult to pin down. But the President's burning impatience encourages "constructive" and "positive" accounts of what is going on.

Though the President is the first to insist that he is hearing all sides of every argument, he himself cannot be sure and critics insist the picture he gets is markedly less rounded now than it was when McGeorge Bundy and Bill Moyers were consciously working to widen his choices.

Washington is full of important people, from Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield to skilled experts in the lower bureaucratic echelons, who complain that they are not being heard by the President. Consultation, they contend, more often than not consists of notification of decisions already made—coupled with pleas for support which are that much more difficult to resist after the fact.

The Strongest Impulse

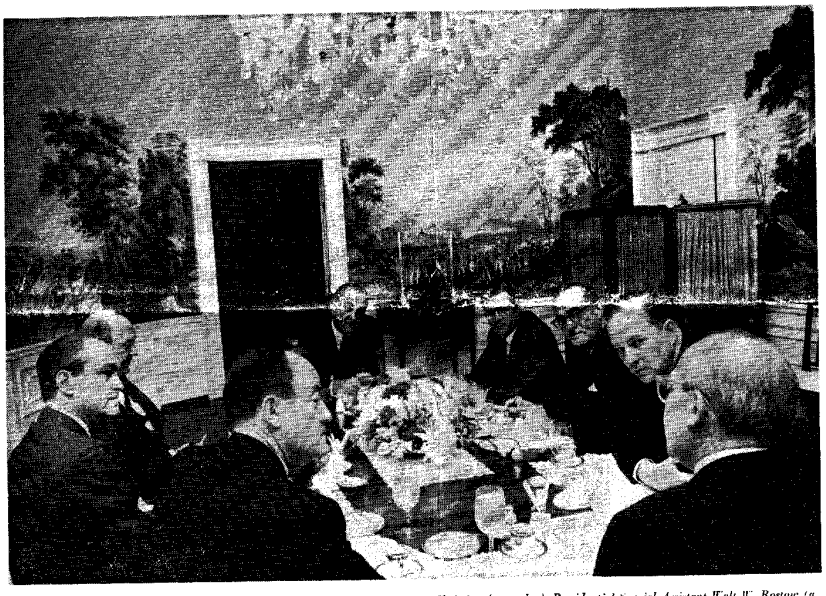
DECISION MAKING revolves around three men: Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara and Special White House Assistant Walt W. Rostow. It gets its strongest impulse from an intimate gathering of the President with these men (plus Press Secretary George Christian and an occasional special guest) at an institution called The Tuesday Lunch.

Mr. Johnson prefers intimacy on the theory that men talk more freely in a small group. He is also an organization man. He puts a high premium on working faithfully through the departments of government which have the statutory responsibility.

The question often raised is whether this produces a built-in momentum behind established policy and forecloses possible new courses. Men with a vested interest in the present policy would be the same men who would have to approve a new one. The answer of the President and his defenders is that the inner circle is by no means as inner-directed as it looks.

It has lines out to a far wider circle—to Gen. Westmoreland; to Ambassador Bunker; to Robert Komer, the pacification specialist in Saigon; to Vice President Humphrey as an old friend as well as a high official and valued confidant; to Ambassador Goldberg at the United Nations for readings of world sentiment on the Vietnam issue and for his role as a channel in UN-initiated peace probes; to Ambassador Harriman at State and Ambassador Thompson in Moscow; to the Joint

See JOHNSON, Page C2, Column 1



The Tuesday Lunch: Last week's gathering in the President's Dining Room at the White House included the five regulars plus three guests. Clockwise from the President are Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara (a regular), Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (an occasional participant), Presidential Press Secretary George E. Christian (a regular), Presidential Special Assistant Walt W. Rostow (a regular), Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey (a rare participant), Central Intelligence Agency director Richard Helms (a rare participant) and Secretary of State Dean Rusk (a regular). The group sometimes and Secretary of State Dean Rusk (a regular). The group sometimes lunches on days other than Tuesday and meets at still other times.

At Tuesday Lunch, Decisions Are on the Menu

A FEW MINUTES before 1 p.m., Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and Presidential Assistant Walt W. Rostow assemble in the second-floor sitting room of the White House, just off the President's Dining Room.

Over a glass of sherry or a dietetic root beer, they compare notes. In a moment or two, President Johnson, who favors the diet drink, arrives, accompanied by his press secretary, George Christian.

For a while, there is conversation. Mr. Johnson recounts an emotional Medal of Honor ceremony from which he has just come. Or perhaps he talks of politics. It is he who signals the switch to affairs of state. It is he who moves the group from the living quarters into the dining room.

The walls of the dining room are covered with brilliantly-colored scenes from the American Revolution, one of them a stylized portrayal of Cornwallis surrendering his sword at Yorktown. It is a painfully contrasting reminder of simpler days to the intimate group of war planners who gather weekly to grapple with the most baffling conflict in American history, the war in Vietnam.

A Movable Feast

THE FORUM is known as The Tuesday Lunch. The title is more symbolic than precise. The group usually lunches on Tuesdays but sometimes on other days. Often these same men gather at other times of day or at other places. Occasionally others join them at lunch.

At the table, Lyndon Johnson dips into the minds of the men around him in smorgasbord fashion. He draws from each his arguments and recommendations and sometimes there are presidential decisions on the spot.

But other times, the decisions come later in the privacy of presidential introspection, emerging from a melange of conversations, formal and informal, held with a variety of officials, members of Congress and private friends and advisers of long standing.

Yet it is The Tuesday Lunch group that creates what order there is in the production of decisions that direct the war. It forms the apex of the process.

At the luncheon, the President sits in a high-backed swivel chair at the south end of the room. Commander-in-Chief by law and in fact, he has the last and controlling word.

At the President's right is Rusk, impassive in the eye of the hurricane; clear-headed to his supporters in his single-minded approach to the war, but simple-minded to his critics. At the President's left is McNamara, a complex man disquieted by a war that cannot be molded into a logical pattern of projectable input, ascertainable cost and discernible result.

At the foot of the table is Rostow, a man of rapidly increased influence, leading advocate of the strategy of vigorously intensifying the war, now eagerly, yet tensely, approaching the time of testing that will prove him right or wrong.

Next to McNamara is Christian, there to keep abreast of foreign affairs so that he makes no misstep in what he says to the press and to offer advice on probable public and press reaction to the options under discussion.

Opposite Christian is usually an empty chair, occupied on occasion by Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Rarely is it filled by Vice President Humphrey. Once in a long while, other invited guests may also draw up a chair. Sometimes, if Rusk or McNamara are out of town, their deputies, Nicholas deB. Katzenbach and Cyrus R. Vance, sit in for them.

Reminiscent of Senate

THE LUNCHEONS became a fixture of the Johnson Administration starting about February, 1964, when McGeorge Bundy sat in the seat Rostow now occupies. It was Mr. Johnson's idea to set up a system of regular meetings on foreign policy questions. The setting provides the President with some of the same sense of relaxed intimacy through physical proximity to his top lieutenants that he had on Capitol Hill as Senate Majority Leader.

The three organizations represented at The Tuesday Lunch prepare for it each in its own way. Rostow, at the White House, is the boss of the agenda. On Mondays, he telephones the offices of Rusk and McNamara, asking what they want discussed.

Many of the items are worked out by Rostow with Rusk's departmental executive secretary, Benjamin H. Read. The President sometimes has suggestions. So does Rostow. Rusk draws topics from the State Department and from his own judgment.

At the Pentagon on Mondays, McNamara, Deputy Secretary Vance and Gen. Wheeler usually have lunch at 12:30. Then at 2 p.m., the three meet with the other military chiefs in the Chiefs' war room and for an hour or more go over the strategy, the target lists, the mundane and sophisticated problems of the war in Vietnam, to isolate the overriding issues that require presidential consideration.

By Tuesday, the President has received papers on all the agenda items (he is a massive bedtime reader), but if something new is added at the last minute, Rostow sees that he is forearmed with a new paper or even a voluminous tab-indexed file.

While Vietnam usually dominates The Tuesday Lunch, there almost always are several other topics. They recently have ranged, for example, from the nuclear nonproliferation treaty and the antiballistic missile problem to the use abroad of Public Law 480 on surplus food and the Indian-Pakistan military supply dilemma.

Vietnam items may be as specific as a target list, Saigon port congestion, inflationary pressures or the state of diplomatic probing.

A Matter of Protocol

ON TUESDAYS, McNamara usually stops off on his way from the Pentagon to the White House to exchange views with Rusk at the State Department. On occasion, Rusk has gone to the Pentagon for this purpose. But for geographic and protocol reasons—Rusk is the senior Cabinet official—it is usually the other way around.

As described by the participants, the talk is unhurried; the approach, leisurely: the examination of the facts, meticulous, with the pros and cons fully debated and the final word of decision, of course, the President's.

There is no stenographer, no tape recorder present. Jotted longhand notations of the President's orders and decisions are taken by Rusk, McNamara and Rostow. But there is no record for history of who took which position on whist issue, the degree of differences or the vigor or absence of it in debating them. None admits writing any memoranda to record that.

On occasion, Mrs. Johnson may drop in on the luncheon to say hello, or Lynda Bird may come by for a quick word with her father. Sometimes during the luncheon, maps and charts are employed, but these are handled by the principals.

The meetings continue over coffee until 2:30 or 3 or even 3:30, depending on the agenda and on other presidential appointments. Afterward, Rusk and McNamara usually leave the White House together, sometimes for another talk at State. Rostow returns to his office in the basement of the West Wing and calls in Bromley Smith, executive secretary of the National Security Council, whose office adjoins Rostow's.

Rostow gets Read at State on the phone, and with Smith taking notes, Rostow tells them both the essential presidential decisions. Rostow takes more notes at the luncheon table than anyone else, notes intertwined with doodles.

Rusk, at State, calls in Read to pass on, verbally, that portion of his own views that he wants to disseminate in State on a need-to-know basis. Information is parceled out to key officials, who include, in addition to Katzenbach, such men as Assistant Secretary William P. Bundy, whose area is the Far East; Leonard Unger, a Bundy deputy, whose time is almost wholly devoted to Vietnam; W. Averell Harriman, who is in charge of peace probes, and United Nations Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg, who is often notified through Assistant Secretary Joseph Sisco.

McNamara, who does not operate as Rusk does through an executive assistant, passes on White House decisions to appropriate officials in Defense on a person-to-person basis. Chief among them are Vance, Gen. Wheeler, Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs John T. McNaughton and the three civilian service secretaries.

Pro Forma 'Ratification'

SOME MAJOR DECISIONS taken at the luncheon sometimes are "ratified" by the larger and more cumbersome National Security Council, where an official National Security Action Memorandum (NASAM) may be formalized for the records.

The National Security Council has long been supplanted as the chief forum for major policy decisions. The NSC was a favorite of President Eisenhower, but President Kennedy, much more of an improviser and prone to ad hoc meetings which cut across bureaucratic lines of authority, let it wither. Mr. Johnson similarly found the NSC

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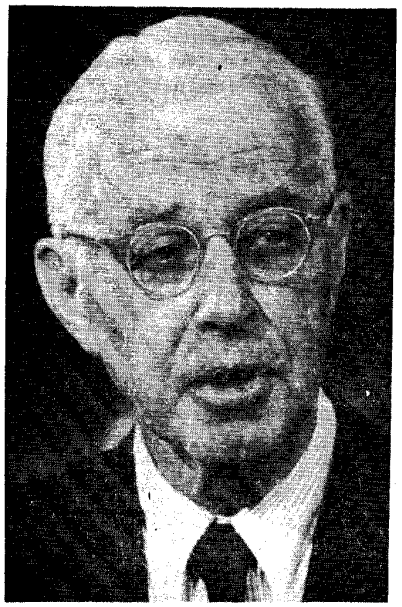
Guesstimate of the Situation

By Ward Just
Washington Post Foreign Service

SAIGON—In Vietnam, all things flow from the "estimate of the situation." The decisions on troop levels and aid funds, and on the crucial matter of American priorities, depend on where the Administration thinks it is and where it thinks it is going. This estimate is a matter of tone, almost of psychology, and it is the responsibility of the American Mission in Saigon.

The head of the Mission, who must assemble and defend the estimate, is Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. From field reports and his personal feel of the situation, he writes a weekly "eyes only" cable to President Johnson on the evolving political situation, the mood of the Vietnamese government, the chronic economic crisis, the plight of the refugees and the potential and capacities of the militant Buddhists. And on the war.

Whatever else it is, Vietnam is first and foremost a war, and the man who supplies the measurements for the estimate of it is the commander of the 440,000 American troops in Vietnam, Gen. William C. Westmoreland. If there were not a war, there would be no dead Americans, and if there were no dead Americans, there would be little concern in the United States.



Ellsworth Bunker . . . a weekly "eyes only" cable to the President.

So while wise men here declare that in the long run it is political evolution that is of crucial importance, right now it is a matter of the Marine Corps and the intentions of the enemy fighting on Hill 881. How long will he hold out? What is his strategy?

Less than 100,000 words in classified cables pass between the U.S. Embassy and Washington each month. The military wordage measures into the millions, and from all the wordage, the Johnson Administration finds the estimates and proceeds from there to its priorities, and its policies.

No Agreed Estimate

THE WAR IS BEING fought on so many different fronts that there is no agreed estimate of the situation and therefore only the fuzziest sense of where the United States is and where it is going, and whether the war is being won or lost. Reflective sources here contend that this is because there is very little agreement on what kind of war it is, and almost no agreement at all on the measurement of its success or failure.

In this Alice's wonderland, the race is most often won by the man who can bring the simplest logic to bear. Prime Minister Ky was once asked what kind of war it was and replied, smiling, "A war against the Vietcong."

The answer satisfied him, and would satisfy many Vietnamese, but it isn't enough for Sen. Fulbright or Secretary McNamara.

The matter of measurements goes close to the heart of the matter:

In the tiny delta province of Vinhlong, there is a top priority project to open the Mangthit Nicolai Canal to commercial traffic. Great controversy now swirls around the canal because the American civilian advisor on the project declares that security is insufficient and the project is doomed to failure because enemy main-force battalions will attack the barges. The American military adviser hotly disagrees.

Neither man can agree on a definition of security, and therefore the matter has been referred to Saigon—which, of course, has no definition either.

The Dead Don't Disappear

A SOURCE OF MAJOR bewilderment among American civilians is the enemy force level. The estimate of it remains constant (about 280,000 men) despite 1500 enemy dead a week, 1000 Chieu Hoi returnees a month, an X factor of enemy wounded, a Y factor of enemy sick and a Z factor of enemy desertions. One knowledgable civilian official challenged the figures, issued by Brig. Gen. Joseph C. McChristian, Westmoreland's intelligence officer. Something, he said, had to be amiss. Either kills were overestimated or infiltration underestimated, but there could not be that many enemy losses without some corresponding loss in his overall strength.

McChristian turned to his bank of computers and the following day produced a revision in the factor estimating enemy wounded, thus bringing the statistics into mathematical balance.

The fact is that no one knows much about infiltration, or the level of security, or a dozen other critical elements which make up the estimate. The American military machine has been excellent at predicting enemy main-force intentions (thus, Westmoreland's successful strategy of "spoiling" attacks) but has not been conspicuously successful at judging the guerrilla infrastructure, for example, or at overall estimates on the progress of the war.

The problem, as military officials have noted, is that many of these are intangibles, difficult to unearth and not soluble by numbers fed into computers.

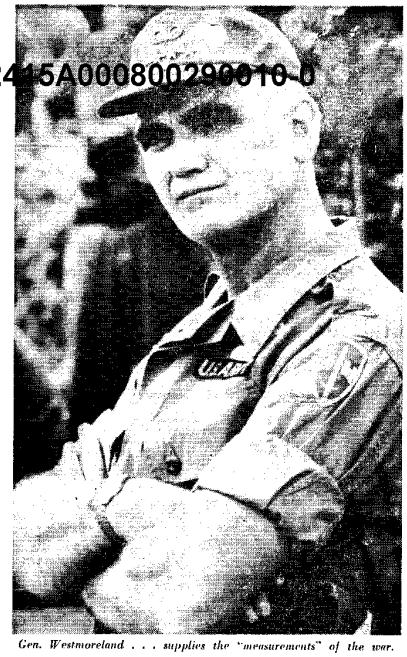
The history of American estimates of the situation is of overoptimism. The chief offender has been the American military command, notably Westmoreland's predecessor, Gen. Paul D. Harkins, and it is suspected that the difficulty lies in the yardsticks used to measure progress. Military officers often use World War II measurements for a war which bears little resemblance to that or any other war.

American troop levels have been consistently underestimated, but officials here declare that Washington must bear part of the responsibility. Two successive Administrations have insisted on fighting a war without disturbing the American electorate.

Civilians Aren't Special

EVEN THOUGH the military is criticized, no one feels that civilians possess special wisdom. American officials here were dismayed and saddened at Robert W. Komer's celebrated report to President Johnson because of its optimistic tone and the statistics it cited. Statistics, as one American official put it, are the bane of the American effort here because they are seldom related to anything and infrequently successful as a measurement.

The Chieu Hoi returnee rate of Vietcong defectors is great and growing, but no senior official appears to know what, if anything, it means. It is better that the rate be high than low, but beyond that officials are loath to guess because too little is known of returnee motivation.



Gen. Westmoreland . . . supplies the "measurements" of the war.

There is little evidence here of pressure on American officials to cook facts and figures to please either the President or his subordinates. Where the disagreements often arise is over priorities, with Washington often more bullish on a statistic (the Chieu Hoi rate, for example) than Saigon. The Saigon mentality is more cautious (or, as officials here prefer to say, realistic), which may be one reason why the President decided to change the entire top civilian team last month.

Government officials publicly put the best face on events but privately, where it counts, men here have a reputation for candor. The startling and useful information not long ago that 50 per cent of the revolutionary development cadres were considered substandard came not from a news leak or from a third-country analysis but from one of the highest American officials in Saigon at a background briefing for correspondents.

The American country team has yet to sort out the wise from the foolish voices in Vietnam, to decide whom to believe and whom not to believe and to construct a workable calculus for the measurement of progress or its reverse.

The result is something like a Tower of Babel, which the cables to Washington probably reflect in some degree. One official believes that is not necessarily a bad thing and not an adverse reflection on Saigon officials. Vietnam is not tidy, and the cables only reflect reality. The sound and fury have not yet yielded significance.

It's a Lot of War Even for a Johnson to Manage

JOHNSON, From Page C1

Chiefs; to the power centers in Congress and to such long-time colleagues as Sen. Russell and Sen. Stennis for soundings of hard-line sentiment, in particular; to such trusted old cronies as Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas or former Truman aide Clark Clifford.

Indeed, for a President who sometimes gives the impression that he acts on impulse, or out of spur-of-the-moment improvisation, Lyndon Johnson probably worries problems more than most Presidents have. He insists on the most meticulous "staffing out" of those alternate courses of action put to him, so much so that a large part of the vast expansion of the war effort over the last two years has been conducted according to contingency plans made in late 1964 and early 1965.

As for consultation, he carries this process to the point where some insiders protest that he over-consults.

The question is not so much who he talks to, or what he reads (one way or another, it seems certain that he is exposed to both sides of almost every argument), but what carries weight with him, and in what circumstance.

Individual advisers can be up one day, down the next, then up again. Their advice can carry or be rejected, depending on such unpredictables as an urgent peace overture from a source such as the Vatican which cannot be ignored, or a transitory set-back for American forces in the field, which might have damaging psychological effects if not offset.

Confusion about how the war is managed is compounded by many other things. For example, the Johnson Computer acts upon itself, so that the input from an influential advocate of moderation and restraint is used to offset the input from the advocates of allout war—and the other way around.

Thus an advocate of a bombing pause, for example, can come away from the Johnson Treatment made in defense of the need to bomb and be convinced that the President is the hardest of hard liners. Mr. Johnson deals in hyperbole; when he makes a point, he makes it ten-feet tall.

Conversely, a critic who questioned the Administration willingness to negotiate might come away overwhelmed by the President's preoccupation with the urgent need to reach a peaceful settlement.

Spasmodic Rhythms

APPEARANCES CAN deceive in other ways, in part because the war has a rhythm all its own. It has moved in spasms of peace probing followed by intensified military pressure. Whichever spasm is current, when the President talks publicly, he is often as not addressing himself to Hanoi or Moscow or Peking.

The temporary appearance of a policy as the public sees it, may be fixed by nothing more substantial than the presence or absence of cloud cover for an extended period over targets in North Vietnam, bringing either a sudden cessation in or a sudden spate of air attacks.

Public appearances by the President may be inspired by the fact that the President wants to address himself to the electorate, for the Johnson Computer also tilts to the findings of Gallup and Harris, as it does to the substantive proposals presented at the Tuesday Lunch.

This is not just a matter of political sensitivity. It is part of a deep-seated Johnsonian belief that his foreign policy as well as his domestic policy must be firmly based on his popularity, that set-backs on one front can imperil the other.

More specifically, the polls play a part in any campaign to impress this country's will and resolve on the enemy. So domestic politics, as only this President can play politics, of necessity figures in calculations about the war.

Justice Abe Fortas . . . a trusted old crony.

All this is basis enough for Lyndon Johnson's insistence that no single adviser really knows what the next decision will be. One reason he gives is that even his highest advisers cannot be masters of the whole process. Another reason, of course, is probably that much of the time the President isn't sure himself, until the last minute. Beyond that, any reliable guide to the future course of the war would require access to even more inscrutable computers in Hanoi, Moscow or Peking.

But the complexity of it all is also a good reason for not drawing flat and final conclusions from the appearance of things. Right now the appearance is of an Administration bent doggedly on intensified war.

That impression has been building steadily ever since the publication by Ho Chi Minh of his exchange of letters with President Johnson in February. As far as Mr. Johnson was concerned, this torpedoed all prospects of early negotiations. It also triggered a fresh burst of bombing raids against the North. It would be logical enough to assume that if Hanoi's will does not crack, this process will proceed inexorably.

But logic is not the only test. For one thing, it is basic to current strategy to project the impression of a relentless increase in military pressure, however far the Administration may in fact be ready to go. For another, there is good reason to believe that the influences at work on the President are a good deal more complicated than simple logic can encompass.

"There are two kinds of over-estimates at work here," says one official. He says that while the diplomats have consistently over-stated the danger of wider war with China or Russia, the military men have as consistently over-stated the probable effectiveness of air power as a persuader of Hanoi, or even as a means of stopping the infiltration of men and supplies to the South.

Some advisers worry that the President may come to discount the chronic anxiety of the diplomats. But most insiders insist he is less likely to take chances on that score than he is to sour on the incessant demands of the military for just one more turn of the screw.

It is not too much to believe that Lyndon Johnson, the Senate tactician who was ever ready to test where the weight of opposing views resided before disclosing his own hand, may be playing his principle Vietnam advisers in somewhat the same way. Having granted the military men most of their reasonable requests without getting very striking results, it would not be at all out of character for him to use that very fact as leverage in moving toward a more defensive, patient, passive strategy leading ultimately to still greater emphasis on pacification of the South, behind whatever bulwark can be erected with manpower and material across the infiltration routes.

Analogy Breaks Down

SUCH A SHIFT might not be the wrench that some suppose, for the shopworn hawk-dove analogy breaks down badly the closer you get to the pinnacle of power and the further removed you are from the extremes—in the Pentagon, or in the peace bloc on Capitol hill.

And it can be stated quite flatly that the computer input is by no means overwhelmingly in favor of pursuing "graduated" military pressure indefinitely against the North. While the complete mix is beyond final analysis, a good many of the major ingredients are known.

Most of the people the President talks to seem to agree that Hanoi's interest in negotiations, or a cease fire, or even a dampening down of the war, by some acknowledged, de facto understanding is next to nil now and will quite likely remain so at least until after next year's presidential election. The current input of peace proposals for anything much more than tactical, or "cosmetic" purposes is negligible.

But the utility of air power is also coming more and more sharply into question. Whatever the President may have thought of the chances that air attacks would do much to bring Hanoi to the bargaining table — and hopes were unquestionably high on this score among his advisers two years ago —he pretty much dismisses that prospect now.

The main reason is that Hanoi shows no real signs of buckling, and the supply of even marginally-useful military targets, which do not present an excessive risk of confrontation with China or Russia, is running out. By some accounts, there are only about 50 such targets left, of which only about a dozen are rated of importance by the President, and only one, Haiphong Harbor, is really of major significance.

As of now, however, the harbor is off limits; all the President's principal advisers seem to agree that it carries with it too high a risk of hitting Soviet ships.

Accordingly, the prospect of sudden, sweeping shifts in strategy looks remote. Despite the Marines' plunge into the DMZ two days ago, the same arguments that weigh against carrying the bombing of the north much further weigh even more heavily against outright full-scale invasion of North Vietnam.

And these arguments are not lost upon the President. Visitors find him far from deaf to the danger of creeping escalation of the war and intimately versed in the pros and cons of the alternatives—"more of the same" in the north, more effective pacification, and a more drawn out struggle focusing in the South; and, ultimately, a more effective shield to shut out the invaders from the North.

Vice President Humphrey is pressing the latter approach on the President. There is no real evidence that the concensus at the Tuesday Lunch is otherwise. Nor is Mr. Johnson unaware of the caution notes coming regularly from such old Soviet hands as Averell Harriman and Ambassador Thompson. If he does not consult Sen. Mansfield as often as the Majority leader would like, it is hard to believe he discounts the well-known Mansfield view.

Events could radically alter any assessment of what may come next. Today's assault on the DMZ could conceivably be tomorrow's sortie into North Vietnam, if the military situation deteriorated seriously enough. Events, to a large extent, are running this war, and the momentum has an ominous look.

But if there is one clear conclusion that emerges from examining the workings of the Johnson Computer, it is that how it looks and sounds is no guide to what it may produce.

Decisions on Lunch Menu

LUNCH, From Page C1

unappealing and too formal for decision-making. In effect, The Tuesday Lunch is the executive committee of the NSC.

More recently in the Johnson Administration, an effort has been made to make the NSC serve an intermediate function—to "focus the town" on coordination of planning for major foreign policy issues on the horizon, such as the interwoven problems of Europe or the future course of Indonesia.

Criticism of The Tuesday Lunch procedure abounds: the group is ingrown; Rusk and McNamara are tired men; there is too much secrecy; there is an inadequate upflow of ideas and an inadequate downflow of results; it is more crisis management than forward looking decision-making.

Secrecy is a Johnsonian passion of old, shared without reluctance by Rusk, McNamara, Rostow and Christian alike. Thus a policy decision reaches much of the governmental structure through the press, either by official pronouncement or by leak from someone who has been told a part of the result.

Certainly there is a widespread feeling among the operating bureaucrats that, as one of them puts it, officials cannot carry out top-level public relations guidance on Vietnam when recommendations do not move up through channels in any systematic way. Only by such orderly procedure, it is argued, can an insider follow and explain the direction in which policy is moving.

Yet if was Rusk himself who recently said that, because of its enormous power, "what the United States does" is "of vital importance to the rest of the world. It is necessary for us to be reasonably predictable—both by our friends and by those who might be our adversaries."